

Written Testimony

HB No. 6518 Act Concerning Emergency Medical Services

Submitted by:

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Good morning,

Thank you to Co-chairs Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to comment on HB No. 6518. My name is Thomas Ronalter, I am the Interim Fire Chief for the City of New Britain.

I am speaking in support of HB No. 6518. This bill makes significant improvements to Connecticut's Emergency Medical Services System. These changes will provide increased system flexibility as a rapidly evolving healthcare system continues to change.

Most important to the City of New Britain are the proposed changes to the Primary Service Area (PSA). Currently, when the Department of Public Health assigns a PSA for ambulance transport services to an organization, it may or may not be the municipality itself. The PSA is also assigned without any required, periodic renewal process. In effect, it is without end unless the organization surrenders the PSA or the Department of Public Health withdraws it due to patient care issues and reassigns it to another entity.

Municipalities have many responsibilities, the most important being the provision of public safety services to its citizens. In the event that a Primary Service Area for ambulance transport services has been given to a non-municipal entity, the town or city still has the responsibility for the public's safety. However, the municipality lacks any role, authority or legal right to determine the mechanism to provide quality, cost-effective EMS services to its residents. How can it be that a basic function of local government be assigned by the State to a private entity without review by the municipality? Today, all levels of government need flexibility and options to provide needed services. The current PSA law severely restricts the ability of towns and cities to determine the best method of providing EMS service.

The proposed HB No. 6518 corrects this problem.

This restriction of municipal authority does not occur with any other service. Imagine twenty years ago, in each of your respective towns, that the State of Connecticut stipulated that the XYZ Waste Management Company was to be given a "Primary Services Area" for trash removal services in your town. The municipality would have no control over which company provided waste management for the town. The city would also have no control over quality and cost issues. This would seem unbelievable. However, that is exactly the situation the current PSA regulations have created in regard to the delivery of EMS transport services; local responsibility without local control.

Proposed HB No. 6518 offers a fair and improved system of Primary Service Areas for ambulance transport services. Appropriately, it provides a reasonable framework for assigning PSA's. Lastly, it provides municipalities the needed and deserved authority to provide critical EMS services to the public.

In closing, I ask for your support of HB No. 6518.

Thank you for your consideration.